

**Orlando, FL (February 26, 2013)** - The Veterans of Foreign Wars recently named Congressman Gus M. Bilirakis (R-FL), Vice-Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, as Florida's 2012 VFW Legislator of the Year. At the ceremony held in Orlando, Bilirakis was praised for his work on behalf of veterans, including his successful passage of H.R. 4057, the Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act.

"Our brave men and women in uniform protect the freedoms and values we enjoy as citizens of this great nation," said Bilirakis. "When they return home, it is our duty and responsibility to ensure they remain a top priority. It has been an honor to work to protect those who have sacrificed so much in service to this country, and I am humbled to have received this recognition."

H.R. 4057 enhances the Post 9/11 GI Bill, ensuring veterans have access to information that will enable them to use their educational benefits most efficiently and effectively. H.R.4057 includes several provisions championed by Bilirakis to improve the lives of our nation's heroes. The bill highlights available educational resources to help GI Bill beneficiaries choose the school best meeting their educational needs. It also limits the total amount of taxpayer dollars which can be paid to senior VA employees in bonuses.

The VFW traces its roots back to 1899 when veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902) founded local organizations to secure rights and benefits for their service: Many arrived home wounded or sick. There was no medical care or veterans' pension for them, and they were left to care for themselves. Its goal is to ensure veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.